

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 220

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the February 2000 deployment of the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit to an area of potential hostilities and the essential requirements that the battle group and expeditionary unit have received the essential training needed to certify the warfighting proficiency of the forces comprising the battle group and expeditionary unit.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 4, 1999

Mr. INHOFE (for himself, Mr. WARNER, Mr. ROBERTS, and Mr. LOTT) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the February 2000 deployment of the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit to an area of potential hostilities and the essential requirements that the battle group and expeditionary unit have received the essential training needed to certify the warfighting proficiency of the forces comprising the battle group and expeditionary unit.

Whereas the President, as Commander-in-Chief of all of the Armed Forces of the United States, makes the final decision to order a deployment of those forces into harm's way;

Whereas the President, in making that decision, relies upon the recommendations of the civilian and military leaders tasked by law with the responsibility of training those forces, including the Commander of the Second Fleet of the Navy and the Commander of the Marine Forces in the Atlantic;

Whereas the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility has been since World War II, and continues to be, an essential part of the training infrastructure that is necessary to ensure that maritime forces deploying from the east coast of the United States are prepared and ready to execute their assigned missions;

Whereas, according to the testimony of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Island of Vieques is a vital part of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility and makes an essential contribution to the national security of the United States by providing integrated live-fire combined arms training opportunities to Navy and Marine Corps forces deploying from the east coast of the United States;

Whereas, according to testimony before the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the report of the Special Panel on Military Operations on Vieques, a suitable alternative to Vieques cannot now be identified;

Whereas, during the course of its hearings on September 22 and October 19, 1999, the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate acknowledged and expressed its sympathy for the tragic death and injuries that resulted from the training accident that occurred at Vieques in April 1999;

Whereas the Navy has failed to take those actions necessary to develop sound relations with the people of Puerto Rico;

Whereas the Navy should implement fully the terms of the 1983 Memorandum of Understanding between the Navy and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico regarding Vieques and work to increase its efforts to improve the economic conditions for and the safety of the people on Vieques;

Whereas in February 2000, the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit are scheduled to deploy to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf where the battle group and expeditionary unit will face the possibility of combat, as experienced by predecessor deploying units, during operations over Iraq and during other unexpected contingencies;

Whereas in a September 22, 1999, letter to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, the President stated that the rigorous, realistic training undergone by military forces “is essential for success in combat and for protecting our national security”;

Whereas in that letter the President also stated that he would not permit Navy or Marine Corps forces to deploy “unless they are at a satisfactory level of combat readiness”;

Whereas Richard Danzig, the Secretary of the Navy, recently testified before the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate that “only by providing this preparation can we fairly ask our service members to put their lives at risk”;

Whereas according to the testimony of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Vieques provides integrated live-fire training “critical to our readiness”,

and the failure to provide for adequate live-fire training for our naval forces before deployment will place those forces at unacceptably high risk during deployment;

Whereas Admiral Johnson, the Chief of Naval Operations, and General Jones, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, recently testified before the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate that without the ability to train on Vieques, the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit scheduled for deployment in February 2000 would not be ready for such deployment “without greatly increasing the risk to those men and women who we ask to go in harm’s way”;

Whereas Vice Admiral Murphy, Commander of the Sixth Fleet of the Navy, recently testified before the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate that the loss of training on Vieques would “cost American lives”;

Whereas the Navy is currently prevented as a consequence of unrestrained civil disobedience from using the training facilities on Vieques which are required to accomplish the training necessary to achieve a satisfactory level of combat readiness; and

Whereas while the Department of Defense is trying to work with the Government of Puerto Rico on a permanent solution to resolve the current training crisis, the Department of the Navy has an immediate requirement to gain access to these facilities for 13 days in December to accomplish the critical integrated training necessary to achieve a satisfactory level of combat readiness for the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

1 (1) the Secretary of the Navy should conduct
2 the 13 days of pre-deployment training which is re-
3 quired to be performed on the Island of Vieques to
4 ensure the U.S.S. Eisenhower Battle Group and the
5 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit are free of serious
6 deficiencies in major warfare areas, thereby reducing
7 the risk to those men and women who we ask to go
8 in harm's way; and

9 (2) the President should not deploy the U.S.S.
10 Eisenhower Battle Group or the 24th Marine Expe-
11 ditionary Unit until—

12 (A) the President, in consultation with the
13 Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the
14 Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the
15 Commandant of the Marine Corps, reviews the
16 certifications regarding the readiness of the bat-
17 tle group and the expeditionary unit made by
18 the Commander of the Second Fleet of the
19 Navy and the Commander of the Marine Forces
20 in the Atlantic, as the case may be; and

21 (B) the President determines and so noti-
22 fies Congress that the battle group and the ex-
23 peditionary unit are free of serious deficiencies
24 in major warfare areas.

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